IN THE CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. (Currently Amended) A conferencing system comprising:

a server for relaying a plurality of compressed audio streams received by the server from conferencing stations to conferencing stations of the system; and

a plurality of said conferencing stations, where each of said conferencing ~~station~~ stations comprises:

a processor,

a microphone coupled through audio capture circuitry to the processor,

a network interface apparatus coupled to the processor,

audio output apparatus,

memory coupled to the processor, the memory having stored therein program modules comprising:

an audio compression module for receiving audio from the audio capture circuitry, compressing the received audio into compressed audio and for transmitting the compressed audio through the network interface apparatus as a compressed audio stream, and

an audio mixer module for receiving at least one compressed audio stream from ~~a~~ at least one of said conferencing stations as relayed by the server through the network interface apparatus, for decompressing and mixing the at least one compressed audio stream into mixed audio, and for providing the mixed audio to the audio output apparatus.

2 (Currently Amended) The conferencing system of claim 1, wherein the audio mixer module of each station receives, decompresses, and mixes a plurality of said compressed audio streams relayed through the server.

3. (Currently Amended) The conferencing system of claim 2, wherein at least one of said conferencing station further comprises:

a video source,

a compression module in the memory for receiving video from the video source, for compressing the video into a first video stream, and for transmitting the first video stream to the server,

a video decompression module for receiving a second video stream, decompressing the second video stream into images, and

a display subsystem for presenting the images to a user.

4. (Currently Amended) The conferencing system of claim 2, wherein the server comprises a relay module for receiving audio streams from the conferencing stations, for combining the received audio streams into a composite audio stream, and for retransmitting the composite audio stream to the conferencing stations, wherein the composite audio stream is created without decompressing or mixing the received audio streams.

5. (Original) The conferencing system of claim 4, wherein the relay module selects a maximum number of received audio streams for retransmission according to a priority scheme incorporating a predetermined conferencing station priority.

6. (Original) The conferencing system of claim 4, wherein a first said conferencing station receives the composite audio stream, decompresses selected audio streams from individual compressed audio streams of the composite audio stream, the selected audio streams determined such that audio from the first said conferencing station relayed through the server is discarded by the first conferencing station.

7. (Original) The conferencing system of claim 2, wherein the server comprises a relay module for receiving audio streams from the conferencing stations, for combining the received audio streams into a composite audio stream, and for retransmitting the composite audio stream to the conferencing stations, wherein the composite audio stream is created by interleaving compressed audio from packets of the received audio streams.

8. (Currently Amended) A first conferencing station comprising

a processor,

a microphone coupled through audio capture circuitry to the processor,

a network interface apparatus coupled to the processor,

audio output apparatus,

memory coupled to the processor, the memory having recorded therein program modules comprising:

an audio compression module audio for receiving audio from the audio capture circuitry and for transmitting compressed audio through the network interface apparatus; and

an audio mixer module for receiving compressed audio streams through the network interface apparatus from a plurality of conferencing stations, for decompressing and mixing the audio streams into mixed audio, and for providing the mixed audio to the audio output apparatus;

wherein the conferencing station decompresses and mixes selected audio streams of the compressed audio streams, the selected audio streams being selected from compressed audio streams of the composite audio stream such that audio from the first said conferencing station is not decompressed by the first conferencing station.

9. (Cancelled)

10. (Original) The conferencing station of claim 8, further comprising a video source, and wherein the program modules further comprise a video compression module for compressing video from the video source and for transmitting compressed video through the network interface.

11. (Currently Amended) A computer software product comprising a machine readable media having recorded thereon machine readable code for execution on a first conferencing station for:

an audio compression ~~modules~~ module for receiving audio from audio capture circuitry, compressing the audio, and for transmitting compressed audio through network interface apparatus to a server; and

an audio mixer module for receiving a composite compressed audio ~~streams~~ stream through the network interface apparatus from ~~a~~ said server, for selecting selected audio streams from the composite audio stream, for decompressing and mixing the selected audio streams, and for providing audio to the audio output apparatus;

wherein the selected audio streams are selected from compressed audio streams of the composite audio stream such that audio from the first said conferencing station relayed through the server is not decompressed by the mixer module.

12. (Currently Amended) A method of conferencing comprising the steps of:

at each of a plurality of conferencing stations, compressing audio into compressed audio, and transmitting the compressed audio as a compressed audio stream to a server;

at the server, combining the compressed audio streams from ~~a~~ the plurality of conferencing stations into a composite stream;

distributing the composite stream over a network to the plurality of said conferencing stations;

at at least one conferencing station, decompressing and mixing a plurality of the audio streams of the composite stream into a reconstructed audio stream; and

driving speakers with the reconstructed audio stream;

wherein the combining the compressed audio streams into a composite stream is performed without mixing.

13-14. (Cancelled) .